

Routes 1 and 13 balance local and distance drivers

While many local drivers have been enjoying quick and convenient travel on Del. 1, others have

Rebuttal



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contacted the Department of Transportation to express their unhappiness with the \$1 toll for two-axle vehicles at the Biddles Corner toll plaza. We have been reminding them that Del. 1 is not intended primarily for local drivers making short-range trips. Instead, it is for longer-distance travelers. Yet motorists who use U.S. 13 will benefit from Del. 1 without driving on it and without paying a toll.

Del. 1 is a quick and safe alternative to Route 13. Longer-distance travelers pay the nominal

toll on Del. 1 in order to avoid Route 13. Removing that traffic from Route 13 reduces congestion and increases safety and convenience for drivers who do use it.

Del. 1 is a critically important road in Delaware. The annual population growth in Delaware since 1990 is 1 percent, yet vehicle miles traveled have grown at an average rate of more than 4 percent. Nationwide, time in vehicles since 1990 has grown at an average annual rate of about 1 percent. However, in Delaware, time in vehicles has grown at an average annual rate of about 1.5 percent. Projections are that time in vehicles in Delaware will grow by another 35 percent by 2020.

Motorists had been calling the Department of Transportation to say they were staying off Del. 1 to avoid the tolls, but were frustrated by congestion in the Route 13 construction area. The department quickly responded as it restriped the shoulder of northbound Route 13 south of the Chesapeake &

Delaware Canal to provide a temporary bypass lane. Signs were installed to encourage motorists in cars to use the temporary bypass lane and continue over the old St. Georges Bridge. Traffic signal timing was adjusted to facilitate predominant traffic movements of northbound travel in the mornings, and southbound vehicles in the afternoons.

Heavy traffic beyond 2000

According to the 2000 traffic forecast data, an average of 59,484 vehicles will travel over the C&D Canal each day on Del. 1 and Route 13. Traffic forecast data indicate that nearly 60 percent of that traffic, or 35,000 vehicles per day, will use Del. 1. For the entire year 2000, almost 13 million total vehicles will avoid Route 13 in favor of Route 1.

When the final Odessa-to-Smyrna section of Del. 1 is completed in 2003, the entire highway will be 42 miles long and will have cost nearly \$1 billion to build. The

state's share of the costs for 35.2 miles of Del. 1 will be approximately \$795 million. The C&D Canal bridge and its approaches were totally funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The \$1 toll for two-axle vehicles at the Biddles Corner and Dover plazas was established based on three factors: the \$795 million cost to the state for construction of Del. 1; the projected number of vehicles that will pay tolls at both plazas in the coming years; and how long it would take to pay the state's share of the project based on various potential toll rates. It was determined that a \$1 toll at each plaza for two-axle vehicles would be fair to motorists and that the state's finance charges would be paid off

by 2027, which coincides with the last payment of the bond.

All motorists are encouraged to consider using E-Z Pass, a convenient system that enables them to save time and money. E-Z Pass electronically deducts the toll from a prepaid account as the vehicle is driven through an E-Z Pass lane. E-Z Pass also provides for an automatic discount ranging from 15 percent for two-axle vehicles to 50 percent for six-

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axle vehicles at every toll plaza and exit ramp toll booth on Del. 1. There is also a special discount for E-Z Pass high-occupancy vehicles.

Electronic toll collection is now or soon will be available on I-95 in Delaware, at the Delaware Memorial Bridge and various toll plazas in six states, including the

New Jersey Turnpike, Atlantic City Expressway and Garden State Parkway in New Jersey; and the Commodore Barry, Walt Whitman, Ben Franklin and Betsy Ross. Discounts vary on the different highways and bridges.

In early December, 4,600 to 5,750 vehicles per day at the Biddles Corner plaza quickly paid their tolls with E-Z Pass. For information or applications for E-Z Pass, call (888) 288-6865; visit www.ezpass.com; or visit the Dover and Biddles Corner toll plazas on Del. 1.

Del. 1 is an effective alternative route for long-distance travelers, and it has significantly improved the quality of life for the thousands of Delawareans who live and commute along Route 13. Those were the department's goals when Del. 1 was designed and constructed.

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